

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 266066

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS: SHUM, BR

SUBJECT: VISITS BY INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS
TO DETENTION SITES IN BRAZIL

THE FOLLOWING IS PROVIDED FYI:

1. IN A DISCUSSION WITH DEPARTMENT OFFICERS ON NOV. 7, MR. SERGIO NESSI, DELEGATE GENERAL FOR LA, OF THE ICRC IN GENEVA, REPORTED THAT IN JULY THE ICRC, IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE BRAZILIAN RED CROSS, VISITED PLACES OF DETENTION ADMINISTERED BY STATE CIVIL AUTHORITIES IN THE SOUTH-EASTERN STATES OF BRAZIL. THESE VISITS ARE PART OF AN INTERNATIONAL ICRC EFFORT TO INSURE HUMANITARIAN TREATMENT AND CONDITIONS FOR POLITICAL PRISONERS. NESSI EXPLAINED THAT ICRC HAS SINCE 1969 MADE UNSUCCESSFUL ATTEMPTS TO OBTAIN FROM CENTRAL GOB AUTHORITIES PERMISSION TO VISIT FEDERAL AND MILITARY PRISONS. PERMISSION FOR THE STATE PRISON VISITS WAS OBTAINED, ACCORDING TO NESSI, FROM THE RESPECTIVE PROVINCIAL MINISTERS OF JUSTICE, RATHER THAN FROM FEDERAL OR MILITARY AUTHORITIES. (PREVIOUS VISITS WERE PERFORMED IN RIO DE JANEIRO AND CURITIBA IN L973, UNDER A SIMILAR ARRANGEMENT.)

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2. NESSI REVEALED THAT ICRC FOUND POLITICAL PRISONERS AT THE STATE CIVIL DETENTION SITES, BUT DECLINED TO COMMENT FURTHER ON ICRC FINDINGS. NESSI SAID THAT HE WAS USING THE TERM "POLITICAL PRISONERS" TO DESCRIBE IN A GENERAL SENSE THOSE WHO WERE IMPRISONED BECAUSE OF POLITICAL BELIEFS AS WELL AS THOSE WHO HAD COMMITTED ACTS OF TERRORISM.

3. A SECOND SERIES OF ICRC VISITS IS PLANNED IN NEAR FUTURE FOR STATE CIVIL DETENTION SITES IN THE NORTH AND NORTHEAST. A FINAL COVERING BOTH SERIES OF VISITS WILL BE SUBMITTED TO THE STATE AUTHORITIES, MILITARY CHIEFS AND THE FEDERAL MINISTRY OF JUSTICE SOMETIME IN FEBRUARY OF NEXT YEAR. (AS IS CUSTOMARY, THE ICRC WILL PROVIDE THEIR CONFIDENTIAL REPORT TO THE RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT ONLY.)

4. THE ICRC HOPES THAT BY SUBMITTING THE REPORT TO GOB WITHOUT PUBLICLY RELEASING THE FINDINGS, THE GOB WILL RECONSIDER ITS POSITION AND ALLOW ICRC VISITS TO FEDERAL AND MILITARY DETENTION SITES.

5. NESSI MADE NO REQUESTS FOR USG ACTION AT THIS TIME IN SUPPORT OF ITS EFFORTS IN BRAZIL, EXPLAINING THAT ICRC WILL WAIT TO SEE WHAT EFFECT ITS REPORT WILL HAVE ON GOB. ICRC DESIRES NO PUBLICITY ON EITHER DISCUSSION WITH DEPARTMENT OR VISITS TO DETENTION SITES.

7. ON RELATED MATTER, DEPARTMENT HAS LEARNED FROM BNAI BRITH IN NEW YORK THAT BRAZILIAN RABBI SOBEL FROM SAO PAULO HAS BEEN GRANTED PERMISSION TO VISIT JAILS IN SAO PAULO THIS WEEK. NOR FUTHER INFORMATION AVAILABLE. KISSINGER

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